

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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R 051726Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6245

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1443

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: PS PLEASED WITH POLL RESULTS

SUMMARY: MARIO SOARES AND SOCIALISTS ARE PLEASED WITH RESULTS OF THEIR FIRST POLL, WHICH SHOWS THEM WELL AHEAD OF RIVALS. PS CALCULATIONS SHOW THEY HAVE MINIMUM OF 36 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE. SOARES BELIEVES 40 PERCENT IS A REALISTIC TARGET. END SUMMARY.

1. RUI MATEUS, SOCIALISTS PARTY INTERNATIONAL DIVISION CHIEF, ON MARCH 4 PROVIDED EMBOFF WITH FOLLOWING RESULTS OF FIRST ELECTION POLL CONDUCTED BY PS:

-- UNDECIDED, 42 PER CENT;

-- PS, 25 PER CENT;

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-- PPD, 10 PER CENT;

-- CDS, 7 PER CENT;

-- PCP, 6 PER CENT.
-- MINOR PARTIES, 2 PER CENT
EIGHT PER CENT SAID THEY WOULD NOT CAST BALLOTS.

2. PS STRENGTH: PS EXTRAPOLATIONS BASED ON THE POLL SHOW THAT SOCIALISTS HAVE MINIMUM 36 PER CENT OF POPULAR VOTE. SOCIALISTS PROJECT CURRENT STRENGTH ALONG POPULOUS COASTAL REGION, BETWEEN OPORTO AND LISBON, AT 43 PER CENT. OPORTO PROJECTIONS SHOW 36 PER CENT "SURE" VOTERS.

3. PS SOFT SPOTS: POLL SHOWED THAT PS SUPPORT WAS GENERALLY STRONG THOROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY BUT WAS WEAKEST IN THE NORTHEAST. SOCIALIST STRENGTH HAD ALSO DROPPED SLIGHTLY -- A FEW PERCENTAGE POINTS, MATEUS SAID -- IN LISBON. MATEUS SAID SOME LOSSES IN LISBON TO CDS AND PPD WERE ONLY TO BE EXPECTED. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME WHO HAD VOTED PS IN 1975 HAD DONE SO BECAUSE THE SOCIALISTS APPEARED TO BE THE ONLY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE COMMUNISTS. THESE VOTERS WOULD PROBABLY VOTE CDS AND PPD NOW THAT THE COMMUNIST THREAT SEEMED LESS IMPOSING.

4. THE UNDECIDEDS: MOST OF THE UNDECIDEDS WERE IN THE NORTH. MATEUS SAID MANY WERE APPARENTLY CONSIDERING EITHER CDS OR PPD. BUT MANY, HE ADDED, WOULD ALSO SUPPORT THE PS.

5. THE COMMUNISTS: MATEUS POINTED OUT THAT, ALTHOUGH 6 PER CENT FOR COMMUNISTS SEEMED HIGH, PCP TOTAL WOULD PROBABLY NOT GO UP MORE THAN A POINT OR TWO SINCE FEW PCP SUPPORTERS WOULD BE AMONG THE UNDECIDEDS. SOARES, HOWEVER, TOLD AMBASSADOR HE THOUGHT PCP MIGHT GO TO 10 PERCENT.

6. MORE POLLS PLANNED: MATEUS SAID THE POLL WAS CONDUCTED BY AN "IN-HOUSE" TEAM, INCLUDING PROFESSIONALS MOONLIGHTING FROM THEIR REGULAR JOBS. THE POLL WAS PART OF A STUDY, RUNNING MORE THAN 50 PAGES IN LENGTH, WHICH FOCUSED ON VOTER TRENDS AND HIGHLIGHTED ISSUES AND OTHER DATA WHICH WOULD BE USEFUL IN REFINING THE PS ELECTION STRATEGY. MATEUS SAID THE PARTY INTENDED TO CONDUCT THREE MORE POLLS PRIOR TO THE ELECTION.

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7. COMMENT: AT AN INFORMAL DINNER AT SOARES' HOUSE WITH TOP SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP, TO WHICH AMBASSADOR WAS INVITED, SOARES AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE BUOYED UP BY THEIR ELECTION PROSPECTS. SOARES PLANS TO MAKE POLL RESULTS KNOWN TONIGHT AT PARTY "PRE-CAMPAIGN" DINNER. WHILE THE DINNER DISCUSSION REVEALED SOME PARTY DIVISIONS OVER CAMPAIGN STRATEGY (BROADEN MEMBERSHIP TO INCLUDE PPD AND PCP DISSIDENTS -- SOARES AND CAMPINOS VS. KEEP THE "NON-DEMOCRATS" OUT --

SALGADO ZENHA AND MEDEIROS FERREIRA) THE TOP PARTY LEADERSHIP IS APPROACHING THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN WITH UNBRIDLED ENTHUSIASM. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF THEIR IMPROVED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THEIR COUP IN ARRANGING THE OPORTO CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN SOCIALIST LEADERS (SOARES SAID SEVEN PRIME MINISTERS WERE SIGNED UP, AND HE WAS TURNING AWAY OTHERS). SOARES THOUGHT 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE WAS A REALISTIC TARGET OF HIS PARTY.
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